



EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

A POLICY STATEMENT FOR ALEC HUNTER HUMANITIES COLLEGE

All individuals, regardless of difference of ability, background, race, religion, gender and personality are of equal worth and have an equal entitlement to all the advantages that a good balanced education can give.

This philosophy underpins:

- our approach to teaching and learning
- our attitude towards students and adults
- our expectation of behaviour of the whole College community
- our regard for and celebration of difference between individuals

The College will provide a variety of access routes to the whole curriculum.

This policy statement seeks to address:

- individuals' different learning needs
- differing backgrounds and expectations
- differing racial and cultural values and experiences
- experiences and expectations based on gender differences
- differing personal and social needs

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES GUIDELINES

STRATEGIES FOR ACTION:

In practice, an equal opportunities environment is a good learning environment. This is why issues of equal opportunities should permeate everything a school does, both in Curriculum and pastoral terms. Many examples of good practice are evident in the school already. Some are being worked on through support and curriculum groups, and through the consultative committee. Change is ongoing, and meets with continual setback and restraint through inadequate resourcing and varied commitment. To overcome these difficulties, priorities for action need to be established and ongoing review mechanisms need to be set up. These are the main functions of the Equal Opportunities Support Group. The first priority is to agree strategies for action within the College, so that all individuals take responsibility for making their own contribution to an equal opportunities environment.

INDIVIDUALS' DIFFERENT LEARNING NEEDS

"The environment of the classroom and the College as a whole will influence the extent to which schemes of work can be successfully brought together.... To meet each student's needs". (N.C. circular No. 2, p6).

All students learn in different ways, and some students have more learning difficulties than others. There is also an enormous range of different learning difficulties and physical disabilities. Thus for the teacher confronted with a class of 30 students, however those students have been selected, the learning achieved by each individual at the end of each lesson will be extremely varied. We cannot address the needs of students without negotiation with them about their difficulties, and without preparation of materials and tasks which enable each child to work at her or his own level. The teacher's task is to provide the challenge and motivation for each child to make good progress in addition to being a source of information.

Some specific objectives include:

- ❖ being more sensitive to the needs of students
- ❖ accepting different ways of presenting work
- ❖ allowing different routes and contexts for the same skills
- ❖ changing groups frequently (friends/mixed ability/similar ability)
- ❖ engaging in active learning strategies, (e.g. research/investigation/drama/role play/model making)
- ❖ valuing all work done by praise and display
- ❖ building up a range of resources for differentiation, including IT (this includes extension work for the most able, which takes them beyond the usual goals into more complicated ideas/concepts)
- ❖ setting goals and targets; and monitoring continually
- ❖ respecting every small achievement
- ❖ using appropriate language, both spoken and written
- ❖ allowing students to do different activities at the same time
- ❖ listening to/asking for advice from the Learning Support experts, and representatives on the Learning Support Group

DIFFERING BACKGROUNDS AND EXPECTATIONS

It must be remembered at all times that not all individuals come from the same background, and therefore will not have the same experiences to draw on. Staff should not assume that students hold or aspire to the same values as they do. Student values and ideas must be accepted. Through their education they will be influenced by the consideration of other views and values; this is one of our main aims. Whilst accepting this point of view we must insist that they obey the rules and laws of society. Instead we should show ourselves to be equally interested in all points of view, and encourage them to explain or expand on their experiences and values, so that other students will also appreciate the 'richness' of variety.

Specific objectives:

- ❖ encouraging a range of views
- ❖ accepting, and being interested in, a range of views
- ❖ celebrating variety
- ❖ never assuming that all students have experienced the same thing(s)
- ❖ never assuming that a student will be interested in something, (e.g. that you will support Ipswich football team because you come from Ipswich/or that you will be more interested in football if you are a boy than if you are a girl).

DIFFERING RACIAL AND CULTURAL VALUES AND EXPERIENCES

In an environment in which the uniqueness of individuals is paramount, racial and cultural differences are just one of many aspects of 'being different'. We all belong to a race or culture, usually by accident of birth rather than choice, and like background, ability and gender, we should celebrate the diversity, and accept that we all have something to learn from each other and not just tolerate each other, but treat with respect those whose backgrounds we may not fully understand. It is also important that we do not assume different backgrounds and values for those whose colour of skin or shape of face is different from the majority, and that through our lessons and resources we help our students to reject prejudice in any form.

Specific objectives:

- ❖ Buying books and resources which show people of all racial types in all situations. Rejecting 'tokenism', i.e. the 'token Indian' in a book otherwise full of Caucasians.
- ❖ Using language that is appropriate to all races. Language studies, in themselves are good vehicles for accepting other cultural practices as a variety of the 'norm'.
- ❖ Being aware of cultural differences and attitudes, so that you don't appear surprised when confronted with a situation where you should show some sensitivity.
- ❖ Always treating racist remarks as verbal abuse, and dealing with them as you would deal with any derogatory remark.
- ❖ Treating racial discrimination as bullying.
- ❖ Using investigations of other cultures in a way which does not always put 'them' down. For instance, we often consider the 'third world' and poverty as 'bad' and wealthy Europe as 'good'. We don't often consider things from another cultural point of view. This is important in all curriculum areas, and needs special attention in areas traditionally considered a-cultural (e.g. Maths, Science).

- ❖ Rejecting stereotyping cultural differences. For example, very few French people wear berets, striped jumpers and onions round their necks, yet we accept this in drawings of French people done by our students.

As there are currently very few black/Asian children at Alec Hunter Humanities College, we need to recognise that our children are impoverished by lack of multicultural direct experience and, therefore, we have MORE, rather than less need to address this issue that truly multicultural schools.

Examples of possible action:

1. *Heads of Departments to monitor resources, especially when buying new materials, and to reject anything that does not come up to standard, and to check that schemes of work include positive images of people from a range of cultures.*
2. *Tutors to be aware of cultural sensitiveness of students and inform staff where difficulties may occur (e.g. it may be an offence to certain cultures to handle pig's trotters in dissection. Do the science teachers know who might be offended?)*

EXPERIENCES AND EXPECTATIONS BASED ON GENDER DIFFERENCES

The continual bombardment of 'girls' and 'boys' as two totally different groups to be treated differently leads to different expectations and therefore, stereotyping. Teachers should be careful to avoid assumptions about 'girls' or 'boys' as a group. Not all boys feel the same, neither do all girls. Elaboration and exaggeration of differences between girls and boys and men and women is rooted in society and leads to much discrimination, misunderstanding and resentment. We should challenge and not reinforce such stereotyping, and give both girls and boys a vision of a society built on respect for people as individuals.

Specific objectives:

- ❖ Segregating students into girls' and boys' group/lines/tasks only when specifically related to reasons of gender or biological significance. For instance toilets and changing rooms need to be separate for reasons of sensitivity. Friendship groups, which may be groups of boys and groups of girls, are chosen voluntarily. Students themselves may choose to do things with others of the same/or different gender for a variety of reasons, but where there is no educational need to segregate, we should avoid it. There may be administrative needs that are assisted by grouping by gender. Where this is so, we should avoid it. Where this is so, we should vary which comes first.
- ❖ Monitoring books and resources for pictures depicting both genders doing a variety of tasks. Books and resources which reinforce stereotypes should be rejected.
- ❖ Ensuring an entitlement curriculum.
- ❖ Never making assumptions about a student's experiences, interests or aspirations because they are a particular gender.
- ❖ Never accepting that any subject is for 'boys' or for 'girls'. If either boys or girls opt out of subject areas or show lack of interest, try to improve the 'image' of that subject for the other gender. Provide a variety of contexts to engage all in interest. If necessary change the way it is presented.

- ❖ Paying attention to the learning environment. Girls or boys may feel intimidated in an environment that does not seem to cater for their interests. Look for bright, lively, non-sexist wall displays.
- ❖ Never allowing behaviour from boys that you would not accept from girls (and vice versa).
- ❖ Never allowing sexist comments to pass without treating it as you would any derogatory remark.
- ❖ Watching out for sexual harassment. This can undermine the confidence of many individuals (including staff as well as students). It is a form of bullying and should be dealt with as such.
- ❖ Trying to give equal attention to boys and girls, and do not give way to students who demand an excessive amount of attention.
- ❖ Monitoring classrooms for problems relating to imbalance between numbers of boys and girls; and with regard to contributions to discussion or student-teacher interaction.
- ❖ Monitoring use of space and resources. Ensure that all students get their fair share.
- ❖ Never 'putting' down a student who cries or shows emotion. Valuing the way different people feel about things. Accept that hormonal changes in adolescence may lead to some emotional disturbances in boys and girls at differing times.
- ❖ Valuing positive attributes or personality, such as caring and gentleness, assertiveness and activity, whether in a boy or a girl.
- ❖ Not allowing either girls or boys to be aggressive, pushy, domineering or bullying. Do not value these as desirable attributes for either gender.

DIFFERING PERSONAL AND SOCIAL NEEDS

We need to recognise that it is easier for some individuals to learn or to be well organized than others depending on their experiences, backgrounds, innate abilities and level of skill development. Home influences may well affect their interest and expectations, and their willingness to perceive alternative points of view. PSE should infiltrate every part of the formal and hidden curriculum. Equal opportunities should permeate our approach to PSE. All of the categories of differences stress tolerance and understanding and sensitivity to differences that are not necessarily chosen. The emphasis is on variety of access routes, on 'allowing' and 'valuing' diversity and regarding it as an enrichment to learning and to life rather than as a nuisance.

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